DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 044 SP 022 995

AUTHOR Faas, Larry A.
TITLE Enrollment Decline as a Cause of RIF's in Education.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; *Declining Enrollment; Elementary Secondary Education; Employment Practices; *Enrollment; Enrollment Trends; Public Schools; *Reduction in Force; Teacher Dismissal; *Teaching (Occupation)
IDENTIFIERS *Arizona (Maricopa County); *Arizona (Pima County)

ABSTRACT

During recent years, employment as a public school teacher has changed from being one of the most secure positions in the nation's workforce to one of the most uncertain. Now, in many districts, there is a good chance newly employed teachers will receive a reduction in force (RIF) notice each spring. The number of educators who are RIFed each spring is well known to the public as a result of reports that appear in the local media. Thirty-two public school districts in Maricopa County and Pima County (Arizona) received questionnaires concerning the number of employees RIFed in the spring of 1981 and then a follow-up questionnaire about how many were reemployed by October 1, 1981. A comparison of the number of employees and enrollment during the year a RIF took place and during the following year indicated that the percentage of decline in the number of employees was twice the percentage of decline in enrollment. Maintenance of the previous year's student-certified employee ratio would have made the RIF unnecessary in most of the districts studied. Nine out of 10 employees who were RIFed were rehired by the following October 1 by the district that gave them notice. (Author/JMK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED234044

Enrollment Decline As a Cause of RIF's in Education

Larry A. Faas

Arizona State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Larry A. Faas

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP022 995

Abstract

A comparison of the number of employees and enrollment during the year of a RIF and during the following year indicated that the percentage of decline in the number of employees was twice the percentage of decline in enrollment in these districts. Maintenance of the previous year's student-certified employee ratio would have made the RIF unnecessary in most of the districts studied. Nine out of 10 who were RIFFED were rehired by the following October 1 by the district that gave them notice.

Enrollment Decline as the Cause of RIF's in Education

During recent years employment as a public school teacher has changed from being one of the most secure positions in the nation's workforce to one of the most uncertain. For as long as most people can remember, newly employed teachers were nearly certain that their contracts would be renewed each Spring until they retired or until they decided to resign. Now, in many districts, there is a good chance that they will receive a reduction in force (RIF) notice each Spring.

Several reasons for RIFing certified school employees are listed in the literature. Most discussions begin with a listing of declining enrollment (Divoky, 1979; Fowler, 1980; Dembowski & Gay, 1980; Seifert, 1977; Corman, 1979; Randall, 1979). Declining revenue was listed as a cause by Mastoraki (1978) and Corcoran (1982). Inflation of costs involved in continuing existing services and programs was listed by Randall (1979), Stanley (1979) and Phay (1980, 1981). Phay also listed reduced teacher turnover, changes in programs and loss of federal and private grant funds as causes.

The number of educators who are RIFFED each Spring is well known to the public as a result of reports that appear in the local media. Little is written about the number of these educators who are reemployed by the districts that issued the notices.

The present study was designed to answer the following questions about the RIF process and its relationship to declining enrollment.

(a) What percent of the districts RIFFED certified employees during the Spring of 1981?

(b) What percent of the certified employees received notices in districts where RIF's occurred?

(c) What percent of those who were RIFFED were rehired by the following October 1?

(d) What change occurred in the ratio of certified employees to enrollment in the districts where RIF's occurred?

(e) Was the change in the number of certified employees justified by the change in enrollment?

(f) Could the RIF's which occurred be justified as responses to enrollment decline?

Method

A data form was mailed to the personnel directors of The 32 public school districts in Maricopa and Pima county Arizona which had the largest number of attendance centers during the 1980-81 school year. Information regarding the names and sizes of the school districts in these counties was obtained from the 1980-81 Arizona Education Directory, a publication of the Arizona State Department of Education.

The data form requested the following information:

(a) The number of certified employees on the district's payroll on October 1, 1980 and October 1, 1981.

(b) The district's enrollment on the 40th day of the 1980-81 and 1981-82 school years.

(c) The number of certified employees RIFFED during the Spring of 1981.

(d) The number of RIFFED employees who had been rehired by the district by October 1, 1981.

The first mailing produced 27 completed responses. A second mailing produced three additional responses. Telephone calls and reference to official

enrollment reports made it possible to secure complete data from 100% of the districts studied.

Enrollments in the districts ranged from nearly 1,400 to over 53,000 students. The average district enrolled 10,377 students. Nineteen of the 32 districts had enrollments of less than 10,000 while five had enrollments in excess of 20,000.

Results

RIF notices were issued during the Spring of 1981 to certified employees in 16 of the 32 districts studied. These 16 districts sent notices to 9.3% of their 10,585 certified employees. They RIFFED from 1 to 25% of their employees. Four districts sent notices to more than 15% of their employees.

Eighty-six percent of the 982 employees who received RIF notices during April of 1981 were rehired before October 1, 1981 by the districts that RIFFED them. The 138 who had not been rehired by that date included 35 persons who could not be located when the districts attempted to recall them.

An increase in enrollment occurred during the Fall following the RIF in six of the 16 districts where notices were issued. These six districts report that they employed 40 fewer certified personnel on October 1, 1981 than one year earlier. It would have been necessary for these six districts to employ 12 additional teachers during the Fall of 1981 to maintain the previous year's student-certified employee ratio.

The 32 districts employed 18,134 certified personnel on October 1 and enrolled 334,134 students on the 40th day of 1980-81 school year. One year later these districts employed 17,855 certified personnel and enrolled 332,076 students. Comparison of these sets of figures indicates that the percentage of

decrease in the number of certified-employees in these districts was 2.48 times as rapid as their percentage of decrease in enrollment. Maintenance of the 1980-81 student-employee ratio during 1981-82 would have made it necessary for these districts to hire 173 more certified employees than they actually employed. It would have been necessary for them to hire 35 more people than the total number who were RIFFED and not invited to return.

The 16 districts that issued RIF notices employed 10,585 certified personnel on October 1 and enrolled 196,786 students on the 40th day of the 1980-81 school year. These districts employed 10,126 certified personnel and enrolled 192,134 students one year later. The percentage of decline in their number of employees was 1.83 times their percentage of decline in enrollment. Maintenance of the 1980-81 student-employee ratio in these districts during 1981-82 would have required 209 more certified employees than were actually employed.

Seventy-four of the 138 certified employees who were RIFFED and not invited to return were from four large districts. These districts employed 5,214 certified personnel and enrolled 99,542 students during the Fall of 1980. A year later they employed 4,970 and enrolled 96,812 students. The percentage of decline in the number of certified employees in these districts was 1.74 times their percentage of decline in enrollment. Maintenance of the 1980-81 student-employee ratio during 1981-82 would have required 101 more certified personnel than were actually employed. Their employment would have eliminated the need to RIF all but 37 of the 621 certified employees who received notices in these districts the previous Spring. Only one other district failed to rehire more than five of the certified employees it RIFFED.

Discussion

The data fails to support the declining enrollment hypotheses (Divoky, 1979; Fowler, 1980; Dembowsky & Gay, 1980; Seifert, 1977; Corman, 1979; and Randall, 1979) as the cause of the RIF's in the districts that were studied. This conclusion is supported by data which indicates, (a) that enrollment increases occurred in six of the 16 districts following the RIF, and (b) the number of employees decreased at a rate that was more than twice the rate of decline in enrollment.

Maintenance of the Fall 1980 student-certified employee ratio during 1981 would have required 35 more employees than were RIFFED and not rehired. This finding suggests that a significant percentage of the reduction in employees was due to other factors such as inflation and a lack of funds rather than a lack of need for personnel.

The failure of 35 persons who had been RIFFED, to leave a forwarding address that would have made their recall possible suggests that substantial feelings of hopelessness may have existed among those who received notices. The rehire of 86% of those who received notices, by October 1, 1981 suggests that nearly nine times as many certified employees were RIFFED as needed to have been. The data fails to justify the RIF's that occurred in many of the districts studied.

Further study is needed to define those factors that made it necessary to reduce the number of employees in these districts more rapidly than their enrollment is decreasing.

Bibliography

Corman, L. Declining enrollments--issues and responses: An annotated bibliography. Current bibliography No. 11. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, March 1979.

Corcoran, K. High school board fires 60 teachers. Tempe Daily News, Tempe Arizona, April 7, 1982.

Dembowski, F. L., & Gay, G. Instructional Effects of Declining Enrollments. Educational Leadership, 1980, 55(2), 173-75.

Divoky, D. Burden of the Seventies: The Management of Decline. Phi Delta Kappan, 1979, 66(2), 87-91.

Fowler, D. H. Effects of Declining Numbers: Poverty? Procrastination? Planning? NASSP Bulletin, 1980, 64, 1-6.

Mastoraki, F. Reduction if force, Bridgeton public schools. Options, opportunities and fiscal impact of declining enrollment. Bridgeton, NJ.: Bridgeton Public School, August 15, 1978 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed 172 418)

Phay, R. E. Reduction in force: Legal issues and recommended policy. NOLPE Monograph Series. National Organization on Legal Problems of Education, Topeka, 1980 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed 195 013)

Phay, R. E. Reduction in Force: Retrenchment in the 1980's. School Law Bulletin, 1980, 11(2) p 1, 4-5.

Randall, J. M. Staffing During a Period of Decline. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American School Administrators' Association, New Orleans, February 14-17, 1979.

Seifert, E. H. Seven ways to ease the pain of reduction in force. Executive Educator, 1981, 3(3), 29.

Stanley, W. L. Jr. Reduction in force: Is your board prepared? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National School Boards' Association, Miami Beach, April 21-24, 1979.